

**Thank You for the trust that you have placed in me.**

**Representative Gardiner thank you for your nomination.**

**Leader Gelber, thank you for your unprecedented support. You are a formidable opponent on the battlefield of ideas. Today as I assume this new role I do so surrounded by many blessings. But none is greater than having you serve as the leader of the loyal opposition during my term.**

**I want to thank the members of the Florida Cabinet for being here today. Governor Bush, there has been no greater influence on me in public life than the way you have led this state. My sincere hope is that I will be half as good as speaker as you have been as governor.**

**Governor-Elect Crist, public office has tendency to separate us from the people we serve. But I know of no one else in such a high public office with such a deep understanding of the real hopes and the real fears of real people. I look forward to our partnership.**

**To my wife Jeanette, let me say today publicly what I have failed to say enough privately. Thank You for your support and for your love.**

**My children, Amanda, Daniella and Anthony. They are too young to understand what today is about, But they are proud of me nonetheless.**

**My parents, who made it the mission of their lives to leave me with a better life than theirs.**

**My brother, my two sisters, my in-laws, and all my family who have all contributed to my success.**

**My employers at Ruden McClosky, at Becker and Poliakoff and now at Broad and Cassel. My mentors, Al Lorenzo, Rebeca Sosa, Tom Feeney, Carlos Lacasa, Mario-Diaz Balart, Mike Fasano, Gaston Cantens, Johnnie Byrd and Allan Bense.**

**My staff, that has worked above and beyond their obligations, and the people of House District 111 from Miami for allowing me to serve.**

**And last but most importantly God, through whom all things are possible.**

**We live in a time of extraordinary and historic economic, political and social transformation. Today, we face challenges that collectively are as alarming and as complex as any we have ever confronted.**

**Unfortunately, we also live in a time when public confidence in the institutions charged with governing and molding society have reached all-time lows because they have failed to act – and failed to achieve.**

**In particular, we have a political system that is growing increasingly incapable of addressing the historic challenges that now conspire against our future. Our modern political culture offers too little leadership and too much negativity. Instead of solving problems, too many of our leaders are focused on assigning blame.**

**The inability of our political process to consistently confront and solve the issues of our day is an emerging crisis. A crisis that leaves us on the brink of a dubious and tragic distinction, the first generation of Americans who will not leave their children with a life better than their own.**

**And so as we gather here today, the opportunity before us is more than routine. It is the opportunity to be the type of genuine political leaders our people so desperately desire and our politics so desperately needs.**

**To seize this opportunity will require us to do three things.**

**First, we must together imagine our future. We must put aside our differences and offer a clear vision of tomorrow that will unite and inspire our people, not divide and discourage them. We simply cannot lead if we cannot articulate where we want to go.**

**Second, the political process must become a battlefield of ideas – not partisanship. A forum for both parties, and for every member, to offer their ideas on how to accomplish our shared vision. Ideas that offer our people real choices. A place where people can all agree on where they want to go – the only question being the best way to get there.**

**Third, our work here must be about solving problems, not winning debates. That means we will be open to all points of view, taking the best that everyone has to offer, without political gamesmanship.**

**100 Innovative Ideas for Florida's Future is our attempt to imagine the future and bring it to life. Our basic principle is simple: we trust the people. And our method was uncomplicated. We asked individuals from all walks of life what they wanted tomorrow to look like, and what they thought was the best way to get there. And from those two simple questions we learned so much.**

**For example, we learned that all Floridians understand that when our children grow up, they will have to compete and succeed in a global economy. They recognize that our competition is not the children of Mississippi or Alabama, but the children of the world. Therefore, while there may be disagreement on how to accomplish it, everyone agrees that Florida must provide the best education system, not just in our nation, but in the world.**

**We learned that Florida's parents fully understand the modern dangers our children face. They recognize that keeping an eye on their children while they play outside is no longer enough, because the internet has allowed predators to reach them inside our very homes.**

**Therefore while some disagree on how to accomplish it, we all agree that Florida should be a national leader in providing parents the tools they need to protect their children from the unique dangers of this rapidly changing world.**

**And we learned how the rising cost of living threatens the economic security of thousands of Floridians.**

**Owners, renters, and business large and small, are all paying more in property taxes than they should. And everyone is paying more in property insurance than we can afford.**

**Therefore, while we may disagree on how to accomplish it, everyone agrees that Florida must address the twin threats of rising property taxes and rising property insurance.**

**The goal, the mission, of 100 Ideas is to serve as a catalyst for solving the day-to-day problems of our people, by putting THEIR ideas to work right here – for them. But while we are proud of our ideas, we are always open to better ones. In fact, our sincerest hope is that these 100 Ideas will inspire 100 competing and maybe even better ideas.**

**Putting these ideas to work for a better Florida will take bi-partisan collaboration. But I caution both Republicans and Democrats alike, we should not abandon our respective principles. Our republic benefits from having different political philosophies engage one another on the battlefield of ideas.**

**Our challenge is to unite behind a tomorrow we all desire, but remain true to our beliefs, and to the people we represent. So that when we disagree, it will not be about beating each other, it will be about deciding the best way to create the tomorrow we all want.**

**I also caution each of you to avoid post-election hubris or, alternatively, post election despair. The emerging consensus in our country today is neither support for nor rejection of either of our political parties.**

**The emerging consensus is the widespread belief that politics is broken. The belief that it doesn't matter who gets elected because nothing is going to happen and nothing is going to change.**

**This reality is illustrated by the 90 miles that separate the southernmost tip of our state from the land of my parent birth.**

**At this very moment, somewhere in Cuba, someone is preparing to risk their lives and cross the Florida straits on an inner tube, because they can not choose their leaders.**

**Yet ironically here in Florida, a place people risk their lives to get to in search of freedom and democracy, in our last election, the majority of the people eligible to vote chose not to.**

**They chose not to because they are disenchanted with politics. Disenchanted because at a time when we face challenges as difficult and as daunting as any in our past, our politics is too much about winning and our leaders are too much about blame.**

**14 months ago, when I challenged us to engage the people of this state in a conversation about the future in an effort to fill the blank pages of a book with 100 Innovative Ideas, I was not sure how this would all turn out.**

**Our travels in search of 100 Ideas took us all over Florida and allowed us to interact with people and places that we would normally never see or learn about.**

**This interaction confirmed for us the power of government to impact lives. We saw first hand how both our actions and our failure to act have real consequences.**

**But the most important lesson we learned was not about our government, it was about our people. Those of us in the political process have a tendency to believe that government is the center of the universe. But our journey confirmed that is people, not government or political leaders who truly shape our world.**

**Beyond this place, beyond this process or these 100 Ideas are the faces of thousands of everyday Floridians whose stories of service will never be honored and may never be told.**

**Men, women and even children that lacking the titles and trappings of public office still manage to impact the world more than any law we can pass ever could.**

**They show us the extraordinary power of simple people to change the world, one person at a time.**

**People like Melisa Page-Bailie. In her early twenties she agreed to become a foster parent. Today, more than 150 foster children later, this wonderful lady is called Mom by nine children; eight of them adopted through the foster care system.**

**Like an incredible group of women, who all lost a child either through miscarriage or stillbirth. Three years ago they learned of some families who were abandoning their deceased babies at the hospital because they couldn't afford to bury or cremate them.**

**So now every October they get together for what they call the Forget Me Not event. They use money raised through the event to provide financial assistance to these families. Since starting the fund three years ago, the Forget Me Not program has helped nearly 150 families lay their children to rest.**

**Even children like Paxton Terris. Most kids can't wait to tear open their birthday presents and start playing with their new toys. But on his seventh birthday Paxton had a different idea that surprised his parents.**

**Having been a patient himself several times Paxton told his parents he wanted to give away all his birthday presents to kids recovering at local South Florida hospitals. Paxton and his parents started the What's Mine Is Yours Foundation, so other kids could donate their own birthday presents.**

**And women like Suk-He. She is the owner of a small gift shop, But her real passion is a project called Angel Hats. She uses her talents to crochet colorful caps for cancer patients at 27 different children's hospitals across the country. Suk-He has made more than 1,900 hats this year alone.**

**She has never met the children whose lives she touches. She does it all on faith, believing without seeing that she is making a difference**

**These unsung heroes remind us that the purpose of our service is not to be somebody, but to do something. For every great leader in human history that we know about, there are scores of leaders who changed the course of history yet whose names we will never know.**

**At a time when politics seems incapable of solving the most basic of problems, all across Florida men and women of simple means and little formal influence are changing the world. They do not sit and wait for government to act first. With or without us, they see pain and move to heal it. They see sorrow and seek to soothe it. They see a need and strive to meet it.**

*Sometimes those of us in politics behave as if our people should hope to be worthy of their leaders.*

*But our journey for 100 Ideas reminded us that it is we, who should hope to be worthy of our people.*

**A people who deserve more than what they now receive from our governing institutions. They deserve leaders who will speak for those who can not speak for themselves. Who will use their influence on behalf of those who have none of their own.**

**Leaders who will unite us through our common hopes, rather than divide us through our darkest fears. The great voices of this era who will call us to the great causes of our time.**

**Make it your deepest aspiration to provide that type of leadership.**

**Reject the political culture we have inherited, and in its place create one worthy of the great people whom we serve and the great causes that await.**

**If we succeed, nothing we will ever do in public service will be more meaningful.**

**I thank you for the opportunity to serve you.**

**May God bless each of you.**